

Media Speaking Points

Impacts of federal government shutdown

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is among the programs impacted by the October 1 federal government shutdown.
- The impact is on both administrative and food dollars.
- Colorado WIC Clinics are in normal operation for the month of October.
- Unless the federal government resumes operations or some other remedy is in place, the Colorado WIC program is not likely to be able to serve participants in November.

State Actions in response to the shutdown

- Our biggest concern is protecting the health and well-being of our participants and minimizing disruptions to the best extent possible.
- **Colorado WIC clinics will be funded through the end of October for services during the federal government shutdown.**
- The State WIC offices have received a small amount of contingency funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to help maintain WIC services. Those funds, along with a small amount of money left from Fiscal Year 2013 (which closed September 30, 2013) that Colorado WIC was authorized to roll over into FY 2014, are providing resources for October.
- This federal shutdown is unprecedented and there currently are many unknowns.
- The State office is monitoring the financial situation on a day-to-day basis to determine the best course of action.
- As new information is shared from the federal level, course corrections may be made.
- Our affected programs will be working with their contacts and participants to share information as it becomes available.

Clinic status

- **Local WIC clinics are asked to continue normal operations until October 31 or further notice.**
- Local agency staff should encourage participants to keep their WIC appointments and continue redeeming their checks for the month of October.
- If funding runs out, clinics may need to serve participants on a priority system or potentially close clinics and stop checks.

Impact on WIC participants

- October WIC checks may be cashed
- Participants should continue to keep their appointments for October.

- In November, there may be a need to end WIC services or participants may be served on a priority system, meaning some of the lowest risk participants may not be served.
- Participants may learn that their November WIC checks are not accepted at their local retailer, Colorado WIC urges them **not to destroy the checks or throw them away**. There may be changes that would allow the checks to be used later that month.
- If WIC participants qualify for The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and they are not on SNAP, we highly encourage them to apply.
- Participants also can use the Hunger Free Colorado Hotline as a potential resource at (855) 855-4626. It is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Those who are hearing impaired, can call Relay Colorado at 7-1-1 or 1-800-659-2656.)

Impact on retailers

- At this time, Local Agency WIC clinics are operating normally. Retailers should accept all October WIC checks.
- If at some point it becomes necessary to modify WIC services so the Colorado WIC Program can meet its financial obligations, we will keep retailers informed via www.ColoradoWIC.com , WIC Alerts.
- We are aware that several WIC Programs across the country are no longer honoring WIC checks. However, Colorado WIC is able to honor October WIC checks used by WIC participants in authorized stores.

Impacts on local community economy

- WIC contributes to the local economy. Every month Coloradans purchase more than \$5 million in nutritious WIC food at more than 425 authorized grocery stores around the state. That adds up to \$185,000 that will not be going into our local economies every day of the shutdown.

Where is the most current information

- There is a WIC Alerts page on the www.ColoradoWIC.com website which is being kept updated. Local agencies, retailers and participants are encouraged to watch this site for the most current information.

Who is eligible for WIC?

- You can participate in WIC if you:
 - Live in Colorado
 - Are pregnant or breastfeeding, and/or have a child younger than five years old.
 - You can be a woman or man and participate in WIC.
 - Have a family income less than WIC guidelines. For example, a woman with two people in her household can qualify for WIC if she earns less

than \$2,392 per month. The full income guidelines are posted on www.ColoradoWIC.com in the WIC Families section.

- Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps or Medicaid are automatically WIC income eligible.

WIC background

- WIC provides quality nutrition services, including:
 - Nutrition and breastfeeding education
 - Nutritious foods, including milk, whole grains, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, standard infant formula and special formula.
 - Healthcare access for low and moderate income women and children with, or at risk of developing, nutrition related health problems
- WIC is an important nutrition program providing benefits to women, infants, and children. Services include:
 - Health and nutrition evaluations;
 - Education on the importance of good nutrition;
 - Referrals to other community services, such as health and dental care, well child clinics, and immunizations;
 - Support and counseling for breastfeeding mothers; and
 - WIC checks for nutritious supplemental foods.
- WIC improves the health, growth and development of children by preventing children's health problems.
- WIC children enter school ready to learn and show better cognitive performance.
- Research shows that poor nutrition during early childhood increases the chance of anemia, limits memory development and a child's ability to learn, and adds to health care costs.
- Poor nutrition during a baby's first five years will affect that baby for the rest of its life.
- During this critical period of a child's development, WIC provides a safe, nurturing environment for education, health care and social service referrals, as well as free access to nutritious foods.
- WIC programs lower Medicaid costs by helping to combat poor nutrition at an early stage, rather than treating the effects once it becomes more serious. For every dollar spent on WIC, up to \$3 is saved in medical costs. The benefits of WIC participation include:
 - Women participating in WIC give birth to healthier babies.
 - Children in WIC are better immunized and are more likely to have regular health care.
 - Health care costs are reduced due to the decrease in the number of low birth weight babies.